**During the fall harvest, please give our farmers a brake**

In New Jersey, agricultural operations enjoy both a luxury and a challenge in being close to where people live who want their farm products.

This creates a beneficial dynamic in which residents of many New Jersey communities form a close bond with their local farmers, get to see the creation of their dietary raw ingredients “just down the road,” and even visit those nearby farms that have incorporated agri-tourism into their business models.

This is especially true in autumn of each year. Outdoor on-farm activities are always popular in the fall, from corn mazes to apple picking to pumpkin patches, many farms in New Jersey have successfully added a farm-visit experience to their offerings. This year, with many popular indoor activities curtailed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, outdoor farm visits are being embraced by more and more residents seeking farm products and wholesome fun.

Autumn also brings to our industry the height of the harvest season. Farmers are racing against the clock to bring in all their wonderful fall agricultural products and wrap up production activities for the year.

Soon, as winter descends upon our region, those farms that don’t operate year-round will take their short respite between the end of the autumn harvest and the next planting season in the spring.

So, for the next several weeks, as this year’s fall harvest culminates, New Jersey residents should see increased activity of farm vehicles out on the roads, from tractors to trucks to hay wagons. It’s an important time to remind other motorists that these are working vehicles driven by farmers and their employees, many of whom are their family members, from whom we all benefit through close proximity.

Please, as you are out and about, even if it’s just making your daily commute, or errands, consider the work our farmers are conducting and the vital job they do by cooperating.

No one likes being caught behind a slow-moving vehicle on the road, whether it is a tractor or just someone driving a passenger car very slowly. But it is only a few minutes and doing something rash like trying to pass a long line of cars without knowing what’s coming in the opposite direction could endanger lives.

Please make sure our farmers will still be here with us next year. Show some patience. It is one of the best thank you gestures we can give to them. Stay safe!

Sincerely,

Douglas H. Fisher, Secretary of Agriculture